

The India Experience: Understanding Commerce

By DEEPANJALI KAKATI

What can a student hoping to someday work in the field of U.S.-India affairs do to gain some work experience? One option is to do an internship in India, a route chosen by New York-born Tina Thomas.

A student of political science and international studies at Yale University in Connecticut, Thomas worked on market reports during her summer internship with the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service in New Delhi. These reports analyze business sectors or industries and are given to U.S. firms, to inform them about what is available in India. She also researched and helped put together a report on clean energy.

Thomas, whose parents moved to the United States from Kerala in the 1980s, feels U.S. companies now need to look for different, innovative ways to come to India, besides the more common avenues of IT companies, fast food restaurants and clothing chains.

As examples, she mentions online education and clean energy, two areas she worked on during her month-long internship. "Online edu-

Tina Thomas added to her knowledge of trade and commerce during an internship with the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service in New Delhi.

cation is a phenomenal thing. You can help people who are poor, who are in rural areas, to receive a great education. Those are also things that U.S. universities, companies or colleges should consider investing in because there's a huge market in



HEMANT BHATNAGAR

India. There are people who want to learn all over India but just don't have the resources...to go to university," she says.

Sometimes, she says, small businesses are a little timid about stepping into the huge market that is India, but if U.S. firms really want to do business in India, they need to come "and push for their ideas and plans." It is also important, she adds, to understand how the two countries do business differently.

Thomas chose an internship because it is crucial to understand

commerce and trade for her subjects at Yale. "I don't think I've had much exposure to trade or commerce or economics. This will definitely help me in that," she says.

With plans to go to law school and also do a masters in public policy, Thomas used her time in India to practice Hindi because "it's such a useful and important skill to have. It allows you to connect with so many different people." Adding that there was also a professional aspect to her decision, Thomas, who is fluent in Malayalam, says that she wants to work some day in the field of U.S.-India affairs and "having a little bit of Hindi under my belt is crucial."

She stays close to her Indian roots through visits to family here every two to three years and through cultural connections such as *Bharatanatyam* lessons, which she took for 10 years.

Thomas, who will graduate next year, has focused her studies at Yale on the regions of South America and India. "I've studied, researched, and worked in South America already, and so, I wanted to come to India...I don't think my studies in South Asia would have been legitimate or acceptable if I hadn't come to the region itself to work."



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The U.S. Foreign Commercial Service

What It's Doing in India

The India office of the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service focuses on increasing U.S. exports to India, particularly from small and medium size companies. With offices at the American Center in New Delhi, the consulates in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata and at satellite locations in Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Hyderabad, its trade specialists assist U.S. firms by providing counseling and advice, information on markets, contacts and trade promotion vehicles.

Part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the commercial service helps Indian companies, too, by organizing buyer delegations to major American trade shows and by providing a platform to connect with hundreds of U.S. companies seeking international partners.

The commercial service advocates on behalf of U.S. companies in India, which gives them an edge over other foreign competition and helps them when unanticipated problems arise. Upon requests from U.S. companies, the service also helps resolve trade complaints arising between U.S. and Indian firms.

<http://www.buyusa.gov/india/en/>

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Yale University

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Internship at Commercial
Service in India

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